



UK Research
and Innovation

UK Research and Innovation Equality Impact Assessment Form

Overview of activity

	Response
Name of activity being assessed	Smart Data Research UK Fellowships (SDRF)
Council/department/project team	ESRC – Smart Data Research UK (SDR UK)
Aims and objectives of the activity	Funding for a research fellowship to undertake innovative and impact-focused research using smart data. Projects should address a significant real-world challenge which is relevant to the UK. Applicants will be expected to allocate at least 20% of their time to activities for delivering impact.
Who is affected by your policy/funding activity/event?	Applicants to the SDRF Existing UKRI Investments Commissioning panel members for the opportunity UKRI staff supporting commissioning and delivering this opportunity
What data and consultation have you used?	Consultations were held with SDR UK's Data Services Leads, as well as with members of the Programme Board. Information from the SDR UK Strategic Advisory Team provided a wider context which was relevant for the framing of the opportunity.

General Equality and Diversity Considerations

ESRC's standard Panel process is designed with fairness in mind.

Eligibility and criteria

The scheme is open to all eligible research organisations (RO). Applicants are eligible for funding whether or not they are established members of a recognised RO, but applicants who are not an established member of a recognised RO must be accommodated by the RO and provided with appropriate facilities to carry out the research.

Track record is not a funding criterion for the scheme, and panels are briefed that they should not pay particular attention to track record of applicants. Whilst track record should play into panel decisions it should not be emphasised to the extent that



innovative / potentially high impact work by less established researchers is disadvantaged. Panels are instructed to assess the application in front of them and not to 'read between the lines' or give the benefit of the doubt based on the reputation of the individual applicant or team, as this would be a form of confirmation bias.

Standard Grant Terms and Conditions

UKRI standard Grant Terms and Conditions comply with UK equality legislation and include provisions designed to mitigate against potential negative impacts (for example, sick pay, parental and adoption leave, the possibility of part-time and flexible working, and grant extensions).

Research Organisations are subject to equality legislation and have a duty to comply with it. RGC 8 states that 'The Research Organisation must assume full responsibility for staff funded from the grant and, in consequence, accept all duties owed to and responsibilities for these staff, including, without limitation, their terms and conditions of employment and their training and supervision, arising from the employer/employee relationship.' Universities are therefore required to make reasonable adjustments as required to support their staff

Panel recruitment

We aim to ensure that the composition of panels is diverse, with each panel having at least a 60:40 gender balance.

Where possible we ensure that the chair and vice chair of each panel are not the same gender.

We encourage applicants across the full range of protected characteristics, we look at panel composition by race/ethnicity and disability status. We do not impose quotas.

Funding Panel members are appointed, first and foremost, based on expertise. Final decisions take into account trying to balance the panels by gender and geography and seek to ensure a diversity of career stage and institutions. We will only make recruitment decisions which compromise diversity when it is objectively justified by the necessity to ensure the required breadth of subject expertise with high quality candidates.

Process

All Funding Panellists participate in an induction which familiarises them with [UKRI's Principles of Assessment and Decision Making](#). All Panellists complete ESRC's Conflict of Interest Form and proposals are allocated accordingly.



Funding Panellists are drawn from the academic community, government departments and third sector organisations. The membership aims to reflect the community it represents, and effort is made to achieve an appropriately balanced membership in terms of gender, age, and ethnic origin.

The Funding Panellists both review (and provide scores) and read (no formal score required) up to 10 applications. After all the scores and comments are submitted, Panellists are invited to participate in a panel meeting in order to reach a consensus score.

Reviewers and readers are required to evidence their views and scores. SDR UK staff conduct usability checks on all review comments and the conversations at the panel meeting to ensure that there is no evidence of bias or that an assessor has failed to provide evidence for their scores in the review. Where this is found, the review will be marked as 'unusable'.

It is the role of the Funding Panel members, under the leadership of the Panel Chair and vice-Chair, to moderate and assess the quality of the reviews and to agree final scores for each proposal. Panel members are briefed on unconscious bias and encouraged to feel empowered to constructively challenge potential bias where they identify it. The Panel Chair plays a particularly important role in this respect.

For each proposal we appoint at least two panel reviewers who formally assess and score the proposal in addition to at least one reader who is not required to score the proposals. Each proposal is assessed by both academic and non-academic experts.

Analysing your impact

Protected characteristics

Protected characteristic	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit	Negative impact	Please explain the impact or why there is no impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible). Detail how you plan to measure the relevant outcomes and outputs of your activity.
	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Positive impact for ECRs as the opportunity specifically invites applications from this career stage group. Age may not be a robust indicator of a career-stage but the assumption is that the majority of early career researchers are at a formative stage of their careers and are younger than more established researchers/academics.</p> <p>Early career researchers may be disadvantaged as the opportunity is open to applicants at all career stages, those with more experience may be more competitive.</p>	<p>Whilst the opportunity is open to applicants at all career stages, the specification particularly encourages applications from early career researchers.</p> <p>The panel will be briefed to focus on the applicant's capability to deliver the research and the quality and innovative nature of the proposal. The potential impact and feasibility of the research will be critical considerations. A track record of delivery is not a central criterion for success.</p> <p>Mentorship and the provision of a supportive research environment for early career researchers in particular will be assessed in the application.</p> <p>We will use social media as well as ESRC and SDR UK networks to promote the</p>

				<p>opportunity and stress that we particularly welcome early career researchers.</p> <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>The timing, delivery application and promotion mechanisms may have a negative impact on applicants identifying as having a disability.</p> <p>Panel meeting members may be strained by the online panel format that will be adopted for assessment.</p>	<p>The Funding Service is compliant with relevant accessibility standards.</p> <p>In addition, applicants should seek support from their institution's research support office.</p> <p>The commissioning timeframe provides applicants with significant time to prepare and submit an application. The application form has been streamlined (reduced word count) to lower the information provision requirements from applicants.</p> <p>A pre-announcement will provide applicants with additional time to plan their applications.</p> <p>Applicants will be provided with an email address and requested to contact the commissioning team to discuss any specific adjustments which they require.</p> <p>Opportunity documents are in dyslexia-friendly fonts and there is minimal use of colours to limit migraines and epilepsy.</p> <p>Online meeting platforms (for the opportunity webinar and the panel meeting) offer an accessible and inclusive environment for</p>

				<p>participants. Participants will be asked to notify the organising team of any adjustments required. Depending on the needs identified, considerations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling the chat function and closed captioning, and adjusting the volume, to support those with hearing requirements. • Adequate lighting, alternative document formatting and potential use of screen readers (ensure any images are well described so that text-to-speech applications can recognise them) for the visually impaired. <p>For the panel meeting, consideration will be given to the length of any online meetings, shortening if necessary and ensuring that appropriate breaks are built into the agenda.</p> <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>
Gender reassignment (Trans identity)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>UKRI records may show the wrong gender.</p> <p>Trans people may be absent from work as a consequence of transition.</p>	<p>We will work to ensure the use of gender-neutral language where possible in our documents.</p> <p>At virtual panel meetings, members may wish to include pronouns in their biography or in their Zoom name.</p> <p>UKRI terms and conditions are flexible in nature and permit absence as a result of medical treatment. We would expect that absence related to transition would be</p>

				<p>covered by the Research Organisation's (RO) relevant policies and strongly encourage ROs to treat absence relating to transition like any other health-related absence.</p> <p>Consideration needs to be given at UKRI level as to how records (including Gateway to Research and other communications materials) might be adjusted.</p> <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>
Marriage or civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marriage or civil partnership information is not requested and there are no eligibility requirements pertaining to this characteristic.	n/a
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Applicants may be absent from work due to parental leave or because of medical appointments or health conditions related to pregnancy.</p> <p>The fixed start date of 1/2/26 may be too inflexible for applicants in the context of pregnancy and associated leave (including surrogacy and adoption).</p> <p>Fellowships are available on a full or part-time basis. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a time commitment for this call may enable those who are pregnant/with childcare responsibilities to effectively plan their time before applying and enable them to participate.</p>	<p>Provisions for parental leave (including maternity leave, paternity leave and leave related to surrogacy and adoption) are covered in the UKRI terms and conditions.</p> <p>Timelines will be agreed and publicised in advance to allow meeting attendees to make arrangements to attend. This will also ensure applicants have advanced notice of deadlines and key dates related to the funding opportunity.</p> <p>The costs of additional childcare for grant-holders, beyond that required to meet the normal contracted requirements of the job, and that are directly related to the project, may be requested as a directly incurred cost if the institutional policy is to reimburse</p>

				<p>them. However, childcare costs associated with normal working patterns may not be sought.</p> <p>We will ensure that gender neutral language (for example parental leave) is used, regardless of sexual orientation.</p> <p>Regular breaks will be built into the panel meetings for parental duties, including breastfeeding/expressing if required.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children)</p> <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There is the potential for bias or discrimination (for applicants or panel members) due to racial or ethnic characteristics.	<p>We will follow UKRI EDI Policy to ensure that all policy recommendations, including those covering panel compositions are followed.</p> <p>Meeting participants will be asked to introduce themselves to ensure correct pronunciation of names.</p> <p>SDR UK will seek non-traditional routes to advertise the fellowships, for example, advertising the fellowships on the Black British Academics website and via social</p>

				media channels which may help reach a wider and more diverse audience. Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There is the potential for bias or discrimination (for applicants or panel members) due to religion or belief.	Ensure that religious observances are taken into account when planning panel meetings. Considerations might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling meetings to avoid major religious festivals. If impossible to avoid then consider mitigations – for example during Ramadan ensuring that meetings finish early so that participants are able to get home to break their fast. • Not scheduling meetings when they would conflict with religious attendance or observance on specific days or times (for example Jewish Sabbath on Friday evenings or Islamic Friday prayer). • Allowing prayer breaks if requested. Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There could be potential discrimination or bias (for the applicant or research participant) due to sexual orientation.	We will follow UKRI EDI Policy to ensure all policy recommendations are followed Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.

Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Use of language can present a barrier to participation, and it may be perceived that those with caring responsibilities are disadvantaged.</p> <p>Panel members may be disadvantaged and unable to attend meetings if they have caring responsibilities</p>	<p>Ensure use of gender-neutral language throughout, for example in call specification and guidance.</p> <p>Ensure that the panel has balanced gender representation. ESRC will, at a minimum, ensure that the panel maintains a 60:40 split in regard to gender.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children)</p> <p>Also see above, under General Equality and Diversity Considerations.</p>
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Additional characteristics

Additional characteristics	Positive impact or opportunity to benefit	Negative impact	Please explain the impact including details of any evidence/data used	Detail actions taken/ that will be taken to increase positive or reduce negative impact (or why action is not possible).
	Leave blank if there is no impact or unknown			
Geographical location and place (consider UK and international offices)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This is a UK-wide and UK-focused opportunity, and applicants must be based at an eligible institution in the UK.	The geographical eligibility criterion is in line with UKRI's standard terms and conditions for funding.

Socio-economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There is potential for those with different socio-economic statuses to be impacted differently by this call.	<p>The panel meeting will be held virtually to facilitate ESRC staff and panel member participation</p> <p>We will follow UKRI Guidance on Business Travel Standards, Subsistence Costs and Expense Claims.</p> <p>We will follow UKRI EDI Policy.</p>
Education background	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The level of educational attainment (PhD) is an implicit eligibility requirement for this opportunity.	This opportunity is focused on university researchers with expertise in smart data research (and relative data science expertise). The opportunity is in line with standard ESRC and UKRI grant application Terms and Conditions.
Parent/guardian responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Those with parent/guardian responsibilities may experience more obstacles in arranging alternative caring support.	<p>We will ensure that access arrangements are provided for the Panel meeting and enable adequate time prior to the events for arrangements to be made by those involved.</p> <p>During the panel meeting, adequate breaks will be provided so that those with parent or guardian responsibilities or other responsibilities can be accommodated.</p> <p>Reimbursement of additional childcare costs if the meeting participant is otherwise unable to attend (this could include additional hours of childcare in the child's usual setting or paying for a relative to travel to care for school age children)</p>

Carer/parent carer responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Those with parent/guardian responsibilities may experience more obstacles in arranging alternative caring support.	<p>We will ensure that access arrangements are provided for the Panel meeting and enable adequate time prior to the events for arrangements to be made by those involved.</p> <p>During the panel meeting, adequate breaks will be provided so that those with parent or guardian responsibilities or other responsibilities can be accommodated.</p>
Political opinion (Northern Ireland only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other characteristics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

<p>Are there general or overarching impacts on multiple groups? What actions will you take to increase positive impact, or reduce/mitigate negative impact?</p>	<p>We are committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all funding applicants. We encourage applications from a diverse range of researchers. We support people to work in a way that suits their personal circumstances. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • career breaks • support for people with caring responsibilities • flexible working • alternative working patterns <p>Applicants are required to set out, where applicable, what approaches and activities they have planned that will embed EDI into their proposed work and will be assessed on the quality of their plans.</p> <p>We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major interruptions and disruptions across our communities. We are committed to ensuring that individual applicants and their wider team, including partners and networks, are not penalised for any disruption to their career, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breaks and delays • disruptive working patterns and conditions
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- the loss of ongoing work
- role changes that may have been caused by the pandemic

Panel members will be advised to consider the unequal impacts that COVID-19 related disruption might have had on the capability to deliver and career development of those individuals included in the application. They will be asked to consider the capability of the applicant and their wider team to deliver the research they are proposing.

Where disruptions have occurred, applicants can highlight this within their application if they wish, but there is no requirement to detail the specific circumstances that caused the disruption.

The Panel meeting will be either hybrid or fully virtual to mitigate the impact of in-person meetings on participants with disabilities and those with parental or caring responsibilities. We will facilitate the use of personal equipment, such as allowing caption use.

UKRI can offer disability and accessibility support for UKRI applicants and grant holders during the application and assessment process if required.



Continued below...

Evaluation

Final Decision:	Select the relevant box	Include any explanation / justification required
1. No negative or positive impact identified, therefore activity will proceed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Adapt or change the activity in a way which you think will eliminate negative impact or promote equality.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The activity has been adapted following the actions described in the previous section.
3. Stop the activity because the evidence shows bias or negative impact towards one or more groups.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4. Barriers and impact identified, however having considered all available options carefully, there appear to be no other proportionate ways to achieve the activity (for example, in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this activity knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Continued below...

Review and sign off

What are the arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the impact of your activity?	<p>An EIA is a live document and should regularly be reviewed throughout the life-cycle of an activity.</p> <p>The EIA will be reviewed at the submission date of the applications, after the panel meeting and at the closure of the award.</p>
Next review date:	September 2025
Will this EIA be published? * Yes/Not required	Yes
Point of contact	<p>Smart Data Research UK</p> <p>smartdataresearch@ukri.org</p>